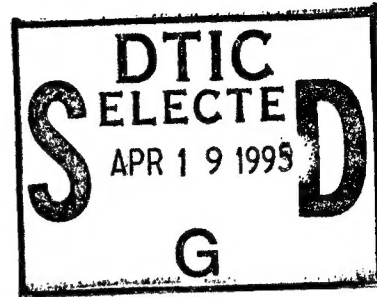


NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
Newport, R.I.



TELL THE TRUTH! CAN THE OPERATIONAL COMMANDER RELY ON THE  
ADVERTISED CAPABILITIES OF THE NAVAL RESERVE FORCE'S SURFACE  
ASSETS?

by

Thomas M. Rossi  
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The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Tom Rossi", written over a horizontal line.

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## ABSTRACT

Over 31% of the United States Navy's combatant surface escort force are guided missile frigates (FFGs) assigned to the Naval Reserve Force (NRF). In order to effectively employ these surface reserve forces in the Joint environment, the operational commander must be able to confidently plan; using the actual, not advertised capabilities of these forces. The current capabilities of the surface NRF are inflated and suggest to the operational commander a NRF ship is capable of sustaining effective, multi-mission combat operations indefinitely or at least as long as its Active Force counterpart.

Documented operational successes of NRF ships are actually the result of the smaller, active duty, core crews of these ships working harder rather than the advertised opinion that these successes equate to the effective operational integration of NRF personnel. The significance to the operational commander is twofold. First, if one ship, NRF or Active, shows up to the theater with capabilities less than those assumed by operational planners, the effect on a maritime battle's end state could be significant. Secondly, if the operational successes of a NRF ship are really the results of harder working active duty crews, then a dangerous manning situation exists which will not be reflected in any readiness report and could result in the operational failure of the ship over time.

Significant changes to manning and training strategies for these ships are required before the operational commander can rely on their sustained performance in the Joint environment.

## INTRODUCTION

As the military forces of the 1990's "rightsized", the importance of the reserve force's contribution within each service component cannot be overstated. In a recent message to the entire Navy, Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Boorda, proclaimed:

"In the smaller Navy of today and in the future, it takes everything and everybody working together to accomplish the mission. 1994 was full of examples with daily contributions by reservists (seabees, frigates, logistics and tactical aircraft, medical intelligence and more) working side by side with Active counterparts in CONUS, and overseas in places like the Persian Gulf, Haiti, the Balkans, Cuba and others. It is clear to me that we are, indeed, one Navy and the sooner we plan, program and execute the missions that way, the better and more capable we will be."<sup>1</sup>

Historically, our nation's military operational commanders have relied upon reserve forces in various applications since the use of armed militia in the eighteenth century. These early reserve forces were typically unorganized and untrained.<sup>2</sup> Following the Civil War, ten states organized Naval Militia for the purpose of coastal defense. During the 1890's, the Navy attempted, unsuccessfully, to organize these independent state militia into a national force. It was not until 1915 that the

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<sup>1</sup> CNO, Washington, D.C., ALNAV message. (041655Z Jan 95)  
p. 3

<sup>2</sup> Coletta, Paolo E. American Naval Heritage In Brief.  
(University Press of America, 1978), p. 58

Naval Reserve was formally established by Congress to augment the active duty naval force.<sup>3</sup>

The Naval Reserve was fully mobilized in World War I and in World War II and partially mobilized in support of the Korean conflict. These mobilizations were chaotic but they did effectively alleviate manning shortfalls in the active duty force caused by war.<sup>4</sup>

Due to the lack of public support for the Vietnam War, civilian leadership resorted to extensive use of Selective Service (the draft) in lieu of reserve force mobilization. In 1973, the end of the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War brought with it the end of the draft and the advent of an all volunteer force.

The post-Vietnam military would be shaped around a Total Force Policy which called for the integration of the National Guard and Reserve with active forces.<sup>5</sup>

Both the economy and public opinion demanded an end to the massive levees experienced under Selective Service. The logical replacement for conscription was a smaller, more professional "all volunteer" force supplemented by well trained, fully supported Reserves during national emergencies.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 196

<sup>4</sup> Chaloupka, M. and Featherstone, M. Reinventing the Naval Reserve: Framework for the Future Volume I. (U.S. Naval War College, Naval Reserve Project, 1993), p. 2-17

<sup>5</sup> Bigelow, R., Chaloupka, M., and Rocket, A. U.S. Naval Reserve: Chronology 1992. (U.S. Naval War College, Naval Reserve Project, 1992), p. 171

<sup>6</sup> Reinventing the Naval Reserve. p. 2-26

In 1987 a policy of "horizontal integration" was adopted which directed the assignment of modern ships and aircraft to the Naval Reserve.<sup>7</sup> By 1992, a total of 35 ships were transferred to the NRF including 16 Oliver Hazard Perry class frigates (FFGs). These 16 NRF FFGs are currently assigned equally to each coast and, as previously stated, comprise over 31% of the United States Navy's surface combatant escort force.

The FFG is a relatively low cost surface combatant whose primary mission areas are anti-submarine warfare, anti-air warfare, and anti-surface warfare. Traditional roles of the FFG include escort operations as part of an aircraft carrier battle group or amphibious readiness group and deployments in support of counter-drug operations. These ships are excellent platforms to contribute to a surface action group and their organic LAMPS SH-60B helicopters enhance their effectiveness in an anti-submarine warfare environment.<sup>8</sup>

The Active Force FFG deploys all over the world and is counted among the combatant commander's (CINC's) controlled, in

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<sup>7</sup>U.S. Government Accounting Office, Reserve Force: DoD Guidance Needed on Assigning Roles to Reserves Under the Total Force Policy, GAO/NSIAD-90-26 (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1989) p.13.

<sup>8</sup> Polmar, N. The Naval Institute Guide to the Ships and Aircraft of the U.S. Fleet. 15th ed. (Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Md., 1993), p.144

theater assets for deliberate planning purposes<sup>9</sup> and as assets available for crisis action planning.<sup>10</sup>

The NRF FFG is currently prohibited from participating in extended deployments and is therefore not normally deployed with carrier battle groups. This is significant because, at this point, one might argue that the NRF FFG will never be of concern to the operational commander since it most likely will not be counted among in-theater assets. The NRF FFG is of concern to the operational commander for two reasons.

First, without any change from current NRF policy, the NRF FFG is frequently deployed off the coasts of Central and South America in support of counter-drug operations. These ships are available and have been called upon to contribute to Joint Task Force (JTF) operations. NRF FFG utilization in support of Haitian operations is one example of such utilization.

Secondly, leaders in the Naval Reserve community are working hard to increase the operational role of the NRF FFG. In August 1992, Commander Destroyer Squadron Six, Captain W.J. Donnelly USNR, chaired a Process Action Team which developed the Inter-Deployment Training Cycle Tactical Training Strategy for the FFG-7 class ship (Active and Reserve).

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<sup>9</sup> Armed Forces Staff College, AFSC PUB 1, The Joint Staff Officer's Guide 1993. (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1993). p. 6-37

<sup>10</sup>Ibid. p.7-16

"The new Tactical Training Strategy Notional Schedule for NRF ships ... is specifically designed to walk the ship through the exact same process as an Active FFG such that at the conclusion of the basic, intermediate and advanced training phases, the NRF FFG is comparably ready as its Active Battle Group deployer counterpart."<sup>11</sup>

The role of the NRF FFG is becoming more operational and the operational commander may find his or her planners suggesting its use in sustained JTF operations.

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<sup>11</sup> Donnelly, W.J. (COMDESRONSIX) Concept Paper; Expanded Role of NRF FFG Consistent With Tactical Training Strategy (TTS) Notional Schedule; 1 July 93. p. 1



## DISCUSSION

The primary mission of the NRF FFG is to train Selected Reservists (Selres) personnel to function as fully integrated crew members and be able to augment active duty forces in time of conflict.

"The purpose of each reserve component is to provide trained units and qualified persons available for active duty in the armed forces, in time of war or national emergency and at such other times as the national security requires, to fill the needs of the armed forces..."<sup>12</sup>

These integrated crews would then be able to augment active duty forces in time of national crisis. Hence, the operational commander would have at his or her disposal, this NRF warship.

Prior to discussing the operational readiness of these NRF FFGs, it is important to understand the manning doctrine which supports them. First, the FFG was built as a relatively low cost warship which was to maximize automation in its propulsion and weapons systems. This automation allowed personnel planners to man these ships with far less personnel than the larger, more manpower intensive warships which preceded them.<sup>13</sup> On top of this minimum manning policy imposed upon the entire FFG-7 class of ships, the active duty crew permanently assigned to NRF FFGs

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<sup>12</sup> U.S. Laws, Statutes, etc., "General Military Law", U.S. Code, Title 10 -- Armed Forces, 1988 ed. (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1988), sec. 262

<sup>13</sup> Jeffrey S. Davis, "A Cost Benefit Analysis of the Naval Reserve Force Frigates", Unpublished Research Paper, Naval Post Graduate School, Monterey, Ca.: 1994. p. 15

is manned to only 70% of the Active Force FFG's manning allowance. The following table illustrates the differences in manning levels:<sup>14</sup>

	ACTIVE DUTY CREW IN ACTIVE FORCE FFG	ACTIVE DUTY CREW IN NRF FFG
OFFICERS ASSIGNED	16	11
ENLISTED ASSIGNED	205	139
TOTAL CREW	221	150

NRF FFGs are operational assets all the time. Despite their assigned mission of training Selres personnel, they are underway assets with taskings which are essentially identical to their active force counterparts with the exception of extended deployments.<sup>15</sup>

These ships do not just get underway for the training of Selres personnel. Consider the fact that Selres personnel train a total of only 38 days each year. This means the vast majority of a NRF FFG's underway time is spent with minimal augmentation from Selres personnel. The active duty personnel permanently assigned to these ships accomplish the same missions assigned to

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<sup>14</sup> U.S. Navy Department. Fiscal Year 92 Ship Manpower Document (SMD) For FFG7 Class, OPNAVINST 5320.427C. Washington: 1991. p. II-1; U.S. Navy Department. Fiscal Year 92 Ship Manpower Document (SMD) For FFG7 (NRF) Class, OPNAVINST 5320.516A. Washington: 1991. p. II-1.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Commander Prindle, Chief Staff Officer, Naval Reserve Readiness Command Region One; Newport, Ri. 13 Jan 1995; Telephone conversation with Lieutenant Edward Lebaron, Destroyer Squadron One staff, San Diego, Ca. 13 Jan 1995.

their Active Force counterparts and do it with only 70% of the Active Force ship's manning compliment.<sup>16</sup>

The potential significance of this manning problem to the operational commander is illustrated in the following example. Recently a NRF FFG deployed for nearly two months in support of Haitian operations. Assuming this ship left homeport with 100% of its active duty force compliment (which is rarely the case for any ship, NRF or Active), it deployed with 70% of the intended manpower strength for that ship class since there were no Selres personnel on board when the ship got underway. Periodically throughout this two month deployment, the ship would pick up two or three Selres volunteers in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, operate for a week or so and then drop them off. At no time during this period did the ship exceed 75% of total planned manning for a FFG7 class ship.<sup>17</sup>

Although operations in support of Haiti turned out to be primarily humanitarian in nature, the operational impact of a minimally manned warship is significant to the operational commander. For example, without Selres augmentation, a NRF FFG gets underway with less than 41% of the total number of Operational Specialists designed to man the ship (9 of 22).<sup>18</sup> It has only one qualified air intercept controller and is probably

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with an Engineer Officer of an NRF FFG homeported in Mayport, Fl.; Portsmouth, Ri. 17 December 1994.

<sup>18</sup> NRF FFG SMD pp. III-2 and III-3.

unable to perform in more than one primary mission area (ASW, AAW, ASUW) while in a Condition I (General Quarters) status.<sup>19</sup>

When fully augmented with its Selres component, a NRF FFG has 16 officers and 203 enlisted personnel assigned, just two men short of the manning level allocated its Active Force counterpart.<sup>20</sup> Again assuming the ship's permanently assigned active duty crew is manned to 100%, a fully augmented NRF FFG only experiences 100% of designed class manning possibly 24 days each year. Selres personnel train in an active duty status a total of one weekend each month and two weeks each year. Full participation of the complete Selres component is only required on the monthly weekend training periods and the Commanding Officer may excuse individual Selres personnel from participating. During these active duty training weekends, the optimum training schedule for the NRF FFG is to get underway Saturday morning and return to port Sunday afternoon.

It is significant to note, although these 12 training weekends are supposed to be spent underway, the NRF FFG's maintenance availability schedule, non-selres training tasking, and especially the extensive selres administrative burdens (physical readiness tests, dental/medical readiness, administration of advancement exams, pay and service record maintenance, conducting general military training lectures, etc.)

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with NRF Engineer Officer and DESRON 1 N-4; December 1994.

<sup>20</sup> NRF FFG SMD. p. II-1

placed on the ship, combine to further dilute the already limited team training opportunities available to the ship.

Since each individual reservist selects the time for his specific two week annual training period, the entire crew (active and reserve) does not train together for more than two days at a time, only 12 times each year.<sup>21</sup>

This significant lack of team training is further exasperated by the fact rarely, if ever, are 100% of the NRF FFG's Selres billets filled. These training problems caused one NRF FFG commanding officer to comment:

"My experience was that, during 27 months in command, I never had more than 50% of my assigned Selres on board for an ACDUTRA [two week, active duty training] period. ...the typical NRF FFG never has the opportunity to conduct intensive underway training with the entire crew on board. The result is that the ship cannot train the various teams required to carry out their wartime missions. Even worse, typically, there is insufficient training time to ensure that the individual reservists complete the qualifications expected of active duty crew members in their ratings and paygrades."<sup>22</sup>

What degree of operational readiness does the fully augmented NRF FFG really bring to the theater of operations during a time of war? I submit the answer to this question, initially, is not much more than the level of operational

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with CSO, Naval Reserve Readiness Command Region One

<sup>22</sup> Malcolm E. Bellamy, "Integrating the NRF FFG into the Active Forces in Peace and War", Unpublished Research Paper, Naval War College, Newport, Ri.: 1991 p. 15

readiness of the ship without its reserve component. This is not to imply the quality of the individual reservist is poor. On the contrary, Selres personnel who serve in NRF FFGs are talented individuals who work hard to contribute to the missions of their ships while presenting a seamless crew structure.<sup>23</sup> The problem is in the training structure with which these ships must comply.

Active duty reserve officers work extremely hard to maximize the underway training opportunities for their Selres personnel. In outlining an innovative Tactical Training Strategy (TTS) for both NRF and Active Force FFGs, Commander Destroyer Squadron Six (DESRON 6), proposed a training strategy which enables the NRF FFG to obtain the exact same level of training work-ups as its Active Force deploying counterpart. In a previously referenced Concept Paper, the Commodore offered specific guidance to his ships' Commanding Officers in the scheduling of Annual Training (AT) for Selres personnel.

"Advanced Training Phase (FLTEX) - NRF FFG operates with BG, sometimes in the Opposition Force (OPFOR) role, to gain experience in Combined Warfare Commander (CWC) and Joint scenarios. This can be another AT period..."<sup>24</sup>

Unfortunately, the hard work of NRF planners to maximize underway training opportunities is simply not enough to make the fully augmented NRF FFG as operationally proficient as its Active

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<sup>23</sup> Common point made by all officers interviewed.

<sup>24</sup> Donnelly, p. 4

Force counterpart. In his cost benefit analysis of the NRF FFGs, Lieutenant Jeffrey Davis conducted extensive research on west coast NRF FFG performance in combat system and engineering readiness examinations. Referencing a Commander Naval Surface Forces Pacific study group's NRF FFG report in August 1991, he quoted:

"NRF FFG-7s are materially comparable to the Active Force FFG-7s, but their combat system readiness is somewhat below the fleet norm."<sup>25</sup>

It is amazing these ships get underway and accomplish what they do with the reduced active duty manning level and sporadic Selres total component training they must endure.

As Admiral Boorda and many other leaders continue to stress, reservists are critical to the success of our Total Force team. I do not disagree! Reservists who, while working in their civilian jobs, routinely practice skills related to those upon which they must draw while serving with the active duty military, are much more likely to effectively contribute to the goals of their respective military units than those Selres personnel who routinely work in unrelated fields. Multi-engine aircraft pilots, doctors, lawyers, construction engineers, etc. are destined for success as Selres personnel and so are the military units to which they are assigned. However, few civilian men and women work in a shipboard damage control environment, conduct

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<sup>25</sup> Davis, pp. 31-44.

corrective maintenance on intricate fire control systems, serve as a member of a weapon system's firing team, or, for that matter, drive a ship in their normal, daily environment.

Even very talented individuals cannot be expected to effectively perform in some of the NRF FFG's more sophisticated ratings when exposed to the limited amount of annual, complete team training NRF Selres personnel receive. Currently, a successful Selres training period could be defined as individual selected reservists completing 15 points of the Personnel Qualification Standard (PQS) for one watch station during a weekend training period.<sup>26</sup> PQS is certainly one fleet - wide measure of effectiveness. However, no single ship or sailor's effectiveness is measured by PQS accomplishment alone. Well after the PQS for a given watch station has been completed, a sailor trains and is evaluated in drill scenarios over and over again until he or she attains and maintains the desired level of watch station proficiency. We currently do not afford this same opportunity to Selres personnel.

To be ready to perform in the Joint operational environment, a ship requires a near 100% team effort in training and execution **all** of the time. Certainly, sustained operational competence **must** require more than 70% of the team training and executing 93% of the time.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> DESRON 1 interview.

<sup>27</sup> 70% = NRF Active Force manning; 93% = 344 divided by 365, where 341 = the number of days in the year when the ship works without its complete Selres contingent.



As a chief engineer and an executive officer afloat, training my watch standing teams to function effectively, either in the operation of the propulsion plant or in damage control training scenarios, was an extremely difficult task even with a relatively steady state crew. I submit it is dangerous to expect NRF FFG crews to function effectively as watch standing or damage control repair party teams with only 24 days each year of **potential** team training. It is even more dangerous to advertise to Joint operational commanders these NRF FFGs as fully, multi-mission capable when clearly, given their limited team training, they cannot be.

In a recent issue, "All Hands" magazine highlighted an article with the phrase, "Reserve Forces Shine".<sup>28</sup> This article described how six NRF FFGs from DESRON 6 completed an eight day exercise which included a missile shoot. The results of the missile shoot were reported as outstanding and led DESRON 6 Commodore, Captain Donnelly, to state:

"We sent a loud and clear signal that DESRON 6 FFGs are warfighting machines of the first order. The active duty and selected reserve crews clearly demonstrated the capability of the Naval Reserve Force FFGs."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> All Hands Magazine of the U.S. Navy, November 1994, p. 1

<sup>29</sup> Kimberley Marks, "Reserve Ships Hone Skills During Missile Shoot" All Hands Magazine of the U.S. Navy, November 1994, p. 38

I have two problems with the possible implications one may take away from this article. First, consider the phrase, "Reserve Forces Shine". Did the actual selected reservists within each of these six ships "shine", or did the permanently assigned active duty portion of the crews within these reserve ships "shine" for this eight day exercise? Secondly, does one successful exercise establish all NRF FFGs as "warfighting machines of the first order"?

I do not doubt that the six NRF ships participating in this particular exercise are good ships, manned by good men who did, in fact, effectively accomplish their mission. I do doubt, however, that Selres personnel had a significant, collective impact on the operational successes of these ships. These six ships would have enjoyed the same success with zero Selres personnel on board. But, because of the manning limitations we have placed upon them, these same six ships would not be able to sustain multi-mission combat effectiveness over time.

## CONCLUSION

"I maintain, based on 27 months in command of one, that the NRF FFGs are not, and should not be expected to be, fully combat ready for immediate deployment into a high threat area, under the present "system". Our manning and employment policies are detrimental to their wartime combat readiness. They will never be equal to their active sister-ships immediately upon mobilization because the selected reservists (SELRES) portion of the crew receives neither the quantity nor the quality of training received by their active duty counterparts, neither as part of the "team" nor as individual crewmembers."<sup>30</sup>

Intelligent, caring parents do not take their children to medical surgeons who only practice surgical medicine 38 days a year and where only 24 of those days demand the attendance of the full surgical team. This is because most people acknowledge surgical medicine requires extensive training under careful supervision and, after certified completion of this training, competence is only achieved and maintained through practice and reevaluation, tempered with periodic advanced training.

The skills required to professionally and safely operate a ship at sea may not be equivalent to the skills demanded of a medical surgeon, but there are similar consequences to be paid if either professional attempts to work in his or her trade without adequate training. In 1990, the Department of Defense conducted a Total Force Policy review in which they admitted shipboard duty may not be a satisfactory application of the reserve force structure.

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<sup>30</sup> Bellamy, p. 2

"While volunteers offer maximum flexibility, cost effectiveness, and responsiveness for the capability attained, several concerns remain. These include: (1) uncertainty regarding the amount and duration of voluntary participation; (2) loss of integral team/unit capability when larger units (e.g., ships, companies) do not volunteer together, and (3) possible employer reprisals against employees who volunteer for active duty."<sup>31</sup>

A ship is an independent, self-sustaining city which requires, not only the **complete** integration of its crew, but the coordinated orchestration of qualified professionals to sustain safe and effective operations at sea. Navy manning doctrine directs the assignment of only the minimum number of men and women to ships in specific ratings and billets required to provide each ship with the opportunity to succeed at sea. In short, there is very little room for unqualified or untrained sailors at sea. So why then do we man 16 of the 51 ships in the FFG-7 class to only 70% of their allotted manning and say, if needed in a time of national crisis, we will augment these crews with quality personnel who have less than 24 days of integrated team training each year?

NRF FFGs typify the "can-do" attitude associated with the surface navy. There may be some complaints, but one would be hard pressed to find the sailor, seaman to captain, who, while assigned to the ship, would say, "My NRF ship can't...". The fact is these ships, manned to 70% of their Active Force counterparts, go to sea and get the job done, most of the time

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<sup>31</sup> Reinventing the Naval Reserve, p. 2-30

with minimal reserve augmentation. The permanently assigned active duty men in NRF FFG crews deserve medals for their hard work and performance to date. The JTF commander deserves to be told the truth about the currently limited capabilities of over 31% of the surface combatant escort force. As long as NRF FFGs go to sea in their current configuration they are dangerous to themselves and to the operational commander. "Full crew integration" and "seamless crew" must become more than catchy NRF buzz words. We must incorporate adequate training opportunities and effective manning doctrine in support of the NRF FFG program if we are to truly provide these ships with an opportunity for sustained success at sea.

NRF FFGs should be manned exactly the same as their Active Force counterparts with portions of the active duty crew staying ashore during designated NRF training periods to make room for the drilling reservists.

NRF FFG Selres training policy should be modified to reflect:

- Mandatory participation of the **entire** Selres component during the preplanned and well advertised, annual two week active duty training period.
- A much greater emphasis on Active Force ships and staffs' role in integrating limited training assets with the NRF.
- Increased "teeth" in the measure of effectiveness used to evaluate Selres training. If and when we think the Selres contingent of a ship is "ready to deploy", let's hit the ship with a "battle problem" during their two week (full Selres component present), active duty training period. Making Selres participation in each of the 12 weekend training sessions mandatory, the two week active duty training period could become the

culmination of 12 full team training periods. (Or replace these 12 sessions with a second, two week active duty training period.)

- An end to the "Drilling for Dollars" mentality prevalent in the Selres community by demanding an increased commitment, from the reservists themselves, to Selres team training.

Only after we have done at least this much, can the operational commander rely on the advertised capabilities of the Naval Reserve Force's surface assets.

The active duty military men and women of the United States serve at the convenience of the government. Sometimes the government's demands for these services are not so "convenient". The Selres community must make a commitment to train effectively and their civilian employers must be called upon to understand this tasking if the NRF FFGs are to become more than a means for justifying the existence of 16 additional hulls. Ninety percent attendance is **not good enough**. Each individual selected reservist choosing the dates for his two week active duty training period is **not good enough**. Either we make the Selres system **good enough** to support effective augmentation of fully mission capable ships at sea, or we admit this particular application of reserve forces is dangerous to both the individual ships and the operational commander.

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